

## NORTH LODGE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held at Park View School, Lombard Drive, Chester-le-Street on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025.

PRESENT: Chairman: Councillor Patrick Driscoll.  
Councillors: Sue Brown, Margaret Caygill, Jackie Gregory, Maureen May, Dennis Hall.  
Clerk: David Murrell.

The Chairman commenced the meeting at 6.30pm by welcoming everyone.

### **Item 1. 25/05 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Craig Martin and Chris Veitch.

### **Item 2. 25/06 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Jackie Gregory declared an interest as a member of the North Lodge Remembrance Group WhatsApp Group.

### **Item 3. 25/07 Report of the County Councillor**

In his absence from the meeting, the County Councillor had provided the following written report -

-----  
The main issue I've been dealing since we last met is the proposal to place a mobile phone mast on the triangular piece of land at the entrance of Picktree Lodge. The need for a new mast comes from that they had to turn another one located in Birtley.

I communicated the building of the mast to residents. Those wishing to object I provided them with some key points to make based on my experience in planning and previous masts that have been rejected. Those points being:

- The area investigated for potential locations for the telecommunications mast is extremely narrow.
- The location will cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the local area. With it being in a prominent location in entering Chester-le-Street and Birtley.

#### Government Proposals for Local Government

The government have indicated their plans for local government over the next few years (sorry Dennis if this steals something you were going to report on). A lot of this doesn't apply to County Durham since we got rid of our district councils many years ago and we now have a regional mayor. But something that could effect us is the indication to get rid police and crime commissioners, giving this role/responsibilities to regional mayors. For this to work in the North East they'd most likely have to abolish Durham Constabulary and have our area run by Northumbria Police.

-----  
The Chairman thanked the County Councillor for his report.

**Item 4. 25/08 Adoption of Minutes of Council Meeting**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2024, draft copies of which had been previously circulated, were adopted as a true and accurate record of the Meeting and were duly signed by the Chairman.

**Item 5. 25/09 Adoption of Minutes of Finance Committee Meeting**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025, draft copies of which had been previously circulated, were adopted as a true and accurate record of the Meeting and were duly signed by the Chairman.

**Item 6. 25/10 Chairman’s Report**

The Chairman’s report included the matters contained in his written report below -

-----  
Happy New Year to all residents and councillors. 2025 has started with some challenging adverse weather, but looking ahead it should be a year of both continuity and change.

The continuity should be contained in maintaining the quality of parish horticulture, regular community litter picks, and a further community arts project. The change involves the Parish Council and County Council elections on the near horizon, and progress on the permanent Remembrance Day memorial project, which should make great strides this year.

Other factors will always come in to play, but if the parish can be successful in the basic aims, it will be a positive outcome for the year.

-----  
Councillors thanked the Chairman for his report.

Regarding outstanding matters -

- a) Re Minute 24/108 section c). Re the service standards of the number 21 bus route, Cllr Gregory advised that, in a reply from the bus company, new buses were to be introduced.
- b) Re Minute 24/110 section c). Re the waste bin which had been re-sited from near to the Wheatsheaf pub but to an unsuitable new site, this matter is to be raised again with the County Cllr at the next Council meeting.
- c) Re Minute 24/111 section c). Re possible alternative banking arrangements, the Clerk advised that there did not appear to be any other banks offering better terms and facilities than the current one.
- d) Re Minute 24/111 section i, sub-section c). Re Section 106 money for the possible funding of the proposed Drum Artwork, the Clerk advised that this money did not appear on the recently released list of available funds. The Clerk had asked the County Cllr to investigate this.
- e) Re Minute 24/111, section j). Councillors considered that the Christmas Tree lights in Picktree Village had not been bright enough. Consideration will be given to trialling rechargeable batteries and/or adding additional sets of lights.

**Item 7. 25/11 Portfolio Holders' Reports**

**a) Communications and Media Development**

In his absence from the meeting, Cllr Veitch had provided the following written report -

-----  
Social Media - A number of posts for December/January. These included posts relating to Online fraud when shopping online, the Police’s Santa in a Van, services provided by DCC over the festive period and the last Litter pick held in 2024.

Litter Pick - The next litter pick and 1st of this year will be on held Tuesday 11th February 2025 meeting at The Lambton Worm at 11am. If any councillors have a specific area they feel needs attention regarding litter please let me know.

-----  
The Chairman thanked Cllr Veitch for his report and invited Cllr Gregory to give her report which

included the matters contained in her written report below -

**b) Crime and Community Safety**

---

Crime

Please refer to Police UK.com

Community Safety

**Durham Police**

The mobile speed monitoring vehicle has visited the parish recently.

Paige Goodwill is the new PCSO for the parish. Arrangements will be made for Councillors to meet Paige in due course.

One of the most advanced police custody suites in the UK has recently opened in Co Durham with the promise of revolutionising operational capability and saving thousands of hours of police time.

Read more about the Investigative Hub here <https://tinyurl.com/ykfrxfy2>

34 new police officer recruits. 18 weeks of intensive training before joining the beat.

23 more officers have successfully completed their two-year Degree Holder Entry Programme in partnership with Northumbria University.

For non emergency telephone calls to police, use telephone number 101

For all emergency telephone calls to police, use telephone number 999

Please visit Durham Constabulary's social media accounts for more information on community matters.

**Co Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service ( CDDFRS)**

CDDFRS firefighters can install smoke alarms for FREE during a Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV).

To book a visit, call us on 0345 223 4221.

It's Register My Appliance Week

We're urging households to ensure old and new domestic appliances are registered for product recalls and safety updates

Stay safe by registering for free : [www.registermyappliance.org.uk](http://www.registermyappliance.org.uk)

#regmyappliance2025

10 new firefighters are set to begin working at fire stations across County Durham and Darlington after completing their initial training

The Service is looking for on-call firefighters for all its fire stations, with a particular need at Stanhope, Middleton-in-Teesdale, Barnard Castle, High Handenhold, Crook, Sedgfield, and Durham.

Applications for the role are open now!

To apply, visit: <https://ddfired-456852.workflowcloud.com/.../1af1d2e4-f4b2...>

Co Durham firefighters received information that people were attempting to ice skate on frozen water in an area of Co Durham.

NEVER walk onto ice covered ponds or rivers.

The ice is unlikely to freeze to a suitable depth to safely walk on.

DO NOT walk or climb onto the ice or go into the water to attempt a rescue.

Follow the Talk, Reach, Throw guidance:

Talk - tell the person in the water to float on their back and to spread their arms as wide as they can across the surface of the ice in front of them.

Reach - if there is no lifesaving equipment, look at what else you can use such as a tree branch.

Throw - them something that floats such as lifebelts or throw bags, if nearby.

If they are attached to a rope, make sure you hold or secure the end.

If you see someone in difficulty in the water, call 999 and ask for the fire service.

There is a current survey which is to help the NFCC develop a new web page called the 'Interactive Career Pathways' to provide guidance and resources on career opportunities within the UK fire and rescue service (UKFRS).

To have your say in the survey visit: <https://nfcc.org.uk/working-in-the-fire-sector/>

This survey will close on Friday, February 28, 2025.

You must be aged 16 years old to take part.

All emergency telephone calls, use telephone number 999

For more information please visit CDDFRS's social media accounts.

### **Durham County Council (DCC)**

Trading Standards officers have been made aware of an on-going nationwide scam that is taking place online, mainly on Facebook Marketplace.

Fraudsters, pretending to be the legitimate London based company, Carwow, have been advertising motorhomes and campervans.

DCC has supported the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner's office Office who funded Bleed Kits which could save lives in Durham City.

The new kit cabinets were installed by DCC and contain items such as pressure bandages, tourniquets and gloves. The kits are close to the Gala Durham, in Durham Market Place and at the bus station on North Road

People travelling by bus in County Durham are set to benefit from a newly agreed cap on the price of travel.

Along with our partners on the North East Combined Authority, we have agreed to bring in a £2.50 cap on adult single fares from January 2025.

Neighbourhood wardens collected over 500 dogs in 2024 only 41% were chipped and only 14% of dogs were returned to owners.

Refer to the following websites for more information:

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/dogcontrol>

To report a stray dog, please contact us <https://www.durham.gov.uk/straydogs>

You can now sign up for garden waste bin collections for 2025.

The garden waste scheme runs from April to November across 17 fortnightly collections, with the price frozen at the same as last year at £38.

To receive all 17 collections in the new year, **you must sign up to the scheme by Monday 17 February**, even if you received collections in 2024.

Vacancies for a wide range of jobs. You can find details of all DCC's current vacancies and how to apply on the website:

[Durham County Council Jobs and Careers https://ow.ly/ygBw50Rf78z](https://ow.ly/ygBw50Rf78z)

For more information please visit DCC's social media accounts

-----  
In addition, a) it was expected that results from recent visits to the Parish by the speed camera van would be available in February. b) Residents had advised Cllr Caygill of several recent thefts and attempted thefts from cars. Cllr Gregory kindly agreed to contact the Police on this matter.

c) Residents had advised Cllr Caygill of continuing concerns re a property near to Low Flatts play area. The Clerk is to contact the Neighbourhood Wardens to confirm that they continue to monitor that property.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Gregory for her report.

### **c) Finance**

In his absence from the meeting, Cllr Veitch had provided the following written report -

-----  
I have inspected the financial information supplied to me by the clerk and can confirm that everything appears correct.

On 14th January 2025 Councillors attended the Meeting of the Finance Committee of North Lodge Parish Council to discuss the precept and voted not to increase the current level. It was also agreed to put on hold 2 projects from the Horticulture portfolio which has a substantial amount of the Parish Council budget. These 2 projects can be brought to council in June following the May elections with fully costed estimates allowing the councillors to make an informed decision and vote whether to progress these projects.

Moving forward can all councillors wishing to bring any future projects to the Parish Council please supply councillors and the clerk with costings and estimates.

-----  
The Chairman thanked Cllr Veitch for his report. Cllr Driscoll then gave his report which included the matters contained in his written report below -

**d) Highways and Community Assets**

-----  
The monthly bus shelters inspection was undertaken on Wednesday the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 2025. Nearly all the shelters appeared to be in good condition, with the exception of the rear wall of the shelter on North Road, near the Barley Mow mini - roundabout. Here there is a gap wide enough to put a hand in where the plaster, and/or an integral piece of stone work has collapsed or eroded. This has been noted for a possible re-filling to restore the integrity of the wall.

In addition, the last pile of leaves was removed from the shelter at the " Lambton Worm" public house, and rubbish sifted out and binned. A large bag of rubbish was removed from the large bushes at the rear of the Northlands shelter, and there was a general litter tidying around the other shelters. The glass cabinets were cleaned, after the recent adverse weather.

-----  
In addition, Cllr Gregory advised that an advertising sign had appeared at the Barley Mow entrance to the Parish. The Clerk is to ask the County Council if permission has been granted for the sign. Councillors thanked Cllr Driscoll for his report.

The Chairman invited Cllr May to give her report which included the matters contained in her written report below -

**e) Horticulture**

-----  
As it is not very pleasant weather this time of year, there is nothing to report on the Parish Council Horticulture, other than to say that the garden maintenance continues with Stephen Makepeace and his Company.

However, I have forwarded an up-to-date email which was sent by Stephen Makepeace, regarding costings for the refurbishing of the shrub bed in Longdean Park.

The Subgroup are hoping that this project can be brought back to Council for approval in the next financial year.

-----  
In addition, Councillors discussed possible sources of funding for the proposed celebration trees for Vigo Lane, including making a Neighbourhood Budget application after the County Council elections in May.

The Chairman thanked Cllr May for her Horticulture report and invited her to give a Partnership Organisations report which included the following matters -

**f) Meetings of Partnership Organisations**

Cllr May gave a report on the previous Area Action Partnership meeting and advised that she would be attending the forthcoming AAP meeting as well as a forthcoming CDALC meeting.

The Chairman thanked Cllr May and invited Cllr Caygill to give her report which included the matters contained in her written report below -

**g) Play Areas**

-----  
**MERLIN DRIVE**

All equipment appears to be in good order.

Two straps on the basket swing have been replaced.

**LOW FLATTS**

All equipment appears to be in good order.

The puddling on the small climbing frame seems to have been addressed.

The main field is littered with mounds of dog hair. Someone has been grooming a dog, removing fawn and cream hair and leaving it.

Once again we have a lot of dog fouling on the field. It has been suggested that a larger more strongly worded sign at the entrance is needed.

Both areas are suffering from Mole infestation, causing tripping hazards with unsightly mounds.

-----  
In addition, a) an item re dog fouling and dog hairs is to be posted to the social media pages. b) Cllr Gregory advised that the County Council had still not removed the old broken play area sign at Merlin Drive. The Clerk is to make arrangements for the sign and post to be removed at the expense of the Parish Council.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report and invited Cllr Hall to give his report which included the matters contained in his written report below -

#### **h) Policy and Governance**

### **KEY GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Policy paper **English Devolution White Paper: Power and partnership: Foundations for growth** (16 December)

The government's proposals to empower local leaders and communities to drive growth and raise living standards across the country.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth>

and see...

<https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/governance/396-governance-news/59480-english-devolution-white-paper-confirms-major-local-government-reorganisation-plans>

Consultation: **Strengthening the standards and conduct framework** for local authorities in England (18 December)

This consultation will last for **10 weeks from 18 December 2024.**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-the-standards-and-conduct-framework-for-local-authorities-in-england/strengthening-the-standards-and-conduct-framework-for-local-authorities-in-england>

and see...

<https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/governance/396-governance-news/59501-government-launches-consultation-on-stricter-standards-regime>

Press release **Major overhaul of planning committees to get Britain building** (9 December)

Planning decisions are set to be fast-tracked in a sweeping overhaul of local planning committees, as part of new measures to tackle the housing crisis.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-overhaul-of-planning-committees-to-get-britain-building>

and see...

<https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/planning/401-planning-news/59393-planning-applications-that-comply-with-local-development-plans-could-bypass-planning-committees-entirely-government-proposes>

Policy paper: Planning Reform Working Paper: **Planning Committees** (9 December)

This paper invites views on how the government could reform planning committees to support a plan-led system and ensure appropriate democratic oversight.

-----  
Cllr Hall then gave some detail to these proposals, policy papers and consultations and considered that they could form part of the most significant changes to local government since 1972.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hall for his report.

**i) Project Development, Business and External Relations**

In his absence from the meeting, Cllr Martin had provided the following written report -

-----  
A number of meetings have taken place with Graham Hopper regarding the remembrance artwork, to move progress on it. The main push is to get the planning application submitted so that this process can begin. It is hoped that the artwork can be put in place by November.

-----  
The Chairman thanked Cllr Martin for his report and invited Cllr Brown to give her report which included the matters contained in her written report below -

**j) Picktree Village**

-----  
A resident and I keep in regular contact regarding speed monitoring. She has messaged today to say vans have been near her property every two days over the last fortnight. She's asking if NLPCOUNCIL could request the results. I have observed a van at Picktree cottages over the last week.

-----  
In addition, a) the Clerk had ascertained that the results from the speed monitoring should be available in February. b) Cllr Gregory advised that coping stones had fallen from the wall alongside the road from Picktree Village to the motorway roundabout. Cllr Brown kindly agreed to contact Lambton Estates to advise them of the possible safety risk to traffic and pedestrians. The Chairman thanked Cllr Brown for her report.

**Item 8. 25/12 Correspondence**

1) From npower Business Solutions  
Letter re electricity prices.

2) From WHP Telecoms Ltd  
Letter re proposed upgrade to existing tower at Pelaw Grange Stadium.

3) From County Durham Association of Local Councils  
email re consultation on strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England.

**Item 9. 25/13 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration**

**a) Planting at Northlands Roundabout**

As this was a matter that would involve discussions with the County Cllr who was not in attendance, Councillors agreed to defer this item to the next meeting of the Council.

**b) Proposed Mobile Phone Mast at Vigo Lane**

The Clerk advised that the planning application had been declined by Gateshead Council. Councillors considered, therefore, that there was no need for a discussion on this matter.

**Item 10. 25/14 Requests for Donations**

The Clerk advised that there was one outstanding request which was from Wag & Company. Councillors agreed that further information was required re the geographical extent of operation of the charity. The Clerk will enquire accordingly.

**Item 11. 25/15 Payment of Accounts**

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 644.48	Salaries December 2024	
Expenses	£ 110.00	Expenses December 2024	
Salaries	£ 644.28	Salaries January 2025	
Expenses	£ 110.00	Expenses January 2025	
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 1882.39	Horticulture December 2024	£313.73
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 1882.39	Horticulture January 2025	£313.73
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 384.00	Picktree Village Tree and Lights	£ 64.00
P. Driscoll	£ 195.00	Chairs Quarterly Allowance	
Forvis Mazars LLP	£ 378.00	Audit Fee	£ 63.00
<b>Total of Above Payments</b>	<b>£ 6230.54</b>		

**Payments Made by Debit Card and Direct Debit**

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - Dec 2024	£ 7.71
DSJ Property Services	£ 40.00	Fitting Locks to Noticeboards	
Greenbarnes Ltd	£ 45.12	Locks for Noticeboards	£ 7.52
HM Revenue & Customs	£ 716.62	Employer's N.I.C.	
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - Jan 2025	£ 7.71
<b>Total Card and D/D Payments</b>	<b>£ 894.24</b>		

**(Resolved** - the payments be approved as submitted).

**Item 12. 25/16 Other Matters for Information**

- a) With the forthcoming elections in mind, Councillors discussed ways to promote to residents the availability of seats on the Council.
- b) Cllr Gregory advised that the Council would be receiving a request from the Police for a donation to the Activity Week.
- c) Cllr Brown advised that a suitable alternative to the service provided by the County Council for the collection of bulky objects could be from the Salvation Army.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.10pm.



**North Lodge Parish Council**

**Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2025.**

	<b>TO</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>REASON</b>	<b>VAT</b>
Salaries		£	Salaries February 2025	
Expenses		£ 110.00	Expenses February 2025	
Makepeace Landscapes		£	Horticulture February 2025	£
<b>Total of Above Payments</b>		<b>£</b>		

**Payments Made by Debit Card and Direct Debit**

	<b>TO</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>REASON</b>	<b>VAT</b>
ANS Group Ltd		£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - Feb 2025	£ 7.71
DSJ Property Services		£ 60.00	Maintenance Works	
<b>Total Card and D/D Payments</b>		<b>£ 106.25</b>		

**Balance to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025**

Balance b/f	£48426.54	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - Jan 2025	<u>£ 6230.54</u>	Community Account	£ 1075.12
	£42196.00	Commercial Instant Access	<u>£44032.12</u>
Deduct Card and D/D Payments	<u>£ 894.24</u>	Total	£45107.24
	£41301.76		
Add Bank Interest Received	<u>£ 77.48</u>	Deduct cheques not yet presented	<u>£ 378.00</u>
	£41379.24		
Add Grant Received	<u>£ 3350.00</u>		
Balance c/f	£44729.24		£44729.24

One cheque not yet presented -  
£378.00 cheque number 1649 dated 21/01/25 payable to Forvis Mazars LLP for Audit Fee.